

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for separating and recovering 3-hydroxypropionic acid from an aqueous solution comprising 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid, the process comprising contacting the aqueous solution with an organic phase comprising an organic extractant other than ethyl acetate.
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2. The process according to claim 1, wherein the organic extractant is selected from the group consisting of an alcohol, an ether, an ester, a ketone, an amide, a phosphorus ester, a halogenated compound, an aromatic compound, a phosphine oxide, a phosphine sulfide, an alkyl sulfide, and mixtures thereof.
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3. The process according to claim 1, wherein the organic extractant is selected from the group consisting of decanol, methyl isobutyl ketone, isopropyl ether, methyl acrylate, methyl propionate, methylene chloride, toluene, isopropyl acetate, tributyl phosphate and mixtures thereof.
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4. The process according to claim 1, wherein the organic extractant is present in the organic phase in an amount ranging from about 1 to about 100 weight percent.
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5. The process according to claim 1, wherein the process is conducted at a temperature ranging from about 0° C to about 100° C.
6. The process according to claim 1, wherein the process is conducted at a volume ratio of organic phase to aqueous solution ranging from about 20:1 to about 1:20.
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7. The process according to claim 1, wherein the process is a counter current extraction, co-current extraction, or cross current extraction.
8. A process for separating and recovering acrylic acid from an organic phase comprising acrylic acid and an organic extractant, the process comprising contacting the organic phase with an aqueous phase comprising water.
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9. The process according to claim 8, wherein the process is conducted at a temperature ranging from about 0° C to about 180° C.

5 10. The process according to Claim 8, wherein the process is conducted at a volume ratio of organic phase to aqueous phase ranging from about 20:1 to about 1:20.

10 11. A process for separating and recovering acrylic acid from an organic phase comprising acrylic acid and an organic extractant having a boiling point lower than 100°C, the process comprising heating the organic phase, in the presence of water, to distill the organic extractant.

15 12. The process according to claim 11, wherein the distillation is conducted at a temperature that is no greater than 100°C and at a pressure that is less than or equal to atmospheric pressure.

13. The process according to claim 11, wherein the organic extractant is isopropyl ether.

20 14. A process for separating and recovering 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid from an aqueous solution comprising 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid, the process comprising the steps of:

25 a. contacting the aqueous solution with an organic phase comprising an organic extractant other than ethyl acetate, to extract the acrylic acid into the organic phase; and

b. contacting the organic phase formed in step (a) with water to extract the acrylic acid from the organic phase.

30 15. The process according to claim 14, wherein the organic extractant is selected from the group consisting of an alcohol, an ether, an ester, a ketone, a amide, a phosphorus ester, a halogenated compound, an aromatic compound, a phosphine oxide, a phosphine sulfide, an alkyl sulfide, and mixtures thereof.

16. The process according to claim 14, wherein the organic extractant is present in the organic phase in an amount ranging from about 1 to about 100 weight percent.

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17. A process for separating and recovering 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid from an aqueous solution comprising 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid comprising the steps of:

10 a. contacting the aqueous solution with an organic phase comprising an organic extractant, other than ethyl acetate, that has a boiling point lower than about 100° C, to extract the acrylic acid into the organic phase; and

b. heating the organic phase formed in step (a), in the presence of water, to distill off the organic extractant, thereby forming an aqueous acrylic acid solution.

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